

Meeting of 1997-6-03 Budget Meeting

MINUTES
LAWTON CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 3, 1997 - 5:30 P.M.
WAYNE GILLEY CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER

Charles Beller, Mayor Pro Tem, Also Present:
Presiding Gil Schumpert, City Manager
Felix Cruz, City Attorney
Brenda Smith, City Clerk

Meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. Notice of meeting and agenda were posted on the City Hall bulletin board as required by State law.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Jody Maples, Ward One
Richard Williams, Ward Two
Jeff Sadler, Ward Three
John Purcell, Ward Four
*Robert Shanklin, Ward Five
Charles Beller, Ward Six
Carol Green, Ward Seven
*Randy Warren, Ward Eight

ABSENT: None.

*Warren entered at 5:40 and Shanklin entered at 5:45 p.m.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MAY 15, 20 AND 22, 1997, SPECIAL LAWTON CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS.

MOVED by Williams, SECOND by Sadler, for approval of the Minutes as submitted. AYE: Williams, Sadler, Purcell, Beller, Green, Maples. NAY: None. OUT: Warren, Shanklin. MOTION CARRIED.

CONDUCT REVIEW OF PROPOSED FY 1997-98 CITY OF LAWTON BUDGET

Schumpert said information had been distributed on budget adjustments; figures assume approval of a fifty cent rate increase. \$40,000 for Wastewater Treatment Plant is in a special account retained from State mandated fees to be applied to the scale. \$300,000 capital outlay reduction is deducted. There was an error in the solid waste budget where an extra employee was included. Net change shows a negative \$76,000; if the rate increase is not approved, there would be a negative \$276,000.

Purcell asked if a 1% rate increase on industrial and commercial water would result in only \$5,400 increased income. Schumpert said that was correct based on the current scale; if it were raised to ninety-three cents per gallon, it would be \$34,000 but none of that is included in the budget.

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Dick Huck, Parks & Recreation Director, presented a video portraying the benefits of parks and recreation to the community.

He reviewed the proposed budget as follows:

ADMIN: Four employees; director, assistant director, secretary, and mail courier.

SPORTS/AQUATICS: Activities include youth football, basketball, baseball, and adult softball. Funding sources include general fund, adult softball fund, and recreation cash fund. There are five full time, and a number of part time, employees. The initiative dealt with field maintenance and resulted in five part time employees being traded for two full time employees, at an increase of \$1,900. Activities also include the municipal swimming pool and three wading pools. Interaction of this division with the public schools was discussed. Capital outlay includes \$12,000 for McMahon Park field maintenance and \$3,400 for an answering system to better inform the public when games are rained out and rescheduled and for upcoming events. \$2,000 pitching machine will be used by 7-9 year olds and will be used to phase out the coach pitch activities; it is an interim program between Tee Ball and Pee Wee teams. \$14,000 sedan will be used by Recreation Supervisor Dorwen Porter.

RECREATION SERVICES: Activities include Carnegie Library Town Hall, Patterson Center, Owens Center and the King Center. Recent staffing changes at Carnegie Library were discussed, as well as having the facility staffed by a non-profit organization, volunteers or City employees who could have office space. \$10,000 was received from rental of the building and fees have been increased recently. Williams asked if the \$5,000 increase for electricity was due to having another building added and Huck said no, it is for these four buildings.

Use of the Owens Center for office space for City activities was discussed, as opposed to use of more of the space for recreational activities. Increase in cost for custodial and mowing services was noted. Green asked if activity coordinators had input into the budget to request money for supplies. Huck said yes, and funds are provided as they are available. Green suggested fliers or public information in some form be provided to let the citizens know what activities are going on and that they are open to anyone who wants to participate, usually at no charge.

SENIOR SERVICES: Facilities include Davis High Rise and Patterson Center. County Nutrition Project uses Patterson Center as a nutrition site; building is used for youth in the evening. Staffing levels were discussed and Huck said consideration was being given to merging recreation and senior services into one budget.

Beller said capital outlay shows a full size van and asked if that was a replacement. Huck said the current van has over 100,000 miles and will likely be transferred to the Library if the new van is approved; Library could use such a van in lieu of using the larger bookmobile in certain cases. Green spoke in favor of purchasing the new van and pointed out problems with transporting patrons from Patterson to the Davis High Rise and the scheduling involved causing some to miss out on the nutrition project offered at Patterson. The County currently has nutrition sites at Pleasant Valley, the King Center, Patterson Center, and the Comanche County Fairgrounds.

RETIRED SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM: Huck said funding sources are the State, DHS, and the general fund. There are two employees; around 300 people participate as volunteers.

ARTS & HUMANITIES: Ann Weisman distributed information regarding proposed programming changes. Due to lack of community support in the Spirit of the Southern Plains event, programming changes are proposed to attempt to involve a larger segment of the population in the programs offered.

The Chamber of Commerce is instituting a New Years Eve family event to be known as First Night; proposal is to provide \$1,400 in support of that event since it will be the first year. Beller asked where it would take place. Weisman said possibilities are having several tents and activities set up at the Mall, or a variety of businesses in the downtown area hosting certain portions, but it has not been finally decided. At midnight there would be one big event, such as a laser light show, to bring the families back together. Rides around the Boulevard of Lights would also be included. Beller said he felt the hotel-motel tax should be used for an event such as this which would meet the criteria of promoting tourism.

Co-sponsorship of programs with non-profit organizations should allow for more activities to be held. There is not a change in dollar amounts, only how the funds will be used. Beller asked if those involved in the Spirit of the Southern Plains were in favor of this change and Weisman said yes. Shanklin said the budget for this activity has jumped 43% in two years. Green said the Juneteenth Celebration will be June 20 at 2 p.m. at the Lawton Community Theater.

McMAHON AUDITORIUM: The protective cage was removed from the capital outlay as a reduction and other methods are being sought; area is currently off limits. ADA Lift will allow disabled persons access to the stage. Williams suggested seeking grant funding for the protective cage.

MUSEUM: Council will be asked to consider an agenda item on June 10 regarding an agreement with the Institute of the Great Plains to develop a public trust.

Shanklin asked if the Tingley Collection would be timely and properly displayed. He emphasized the importance of keeping promises to McMahon Foundation and said if there will be any problems in this regard, it should be brought out now.

Schumpert said the agreement between the City, Institute and McMahon Foundation was when the expansion is finished, the City's commitment was to help build the exhibit. The only dilemma is that in between all this there has been an asbestos abatement situation. One approach, and the least expensive, is to move the present operation into the new structure, remove the asbestos, and move it back. The other way, favored by the Institute, is moving in four phases, redoing the old area, and have asbestos removed in each phase, which is more expensive. McMahon Foundation is aware of the situation and we are meeting with the Institute about it. As part of the phasing operation, the Museum came up with an additional renovation. One of the items that was not considered in the expansion was extending the mezzanine and restructuring the offices. If we touch the asbestos or electricity and something happens, the HVAC and electrical systems are 35 years old and would have to be brought to code. Schumpert said he met with Dr. Graybill, Jim Wood and Kenneth Bridges this week and discussed it; there was no mention of the Tingley Collection or when there would be a grand opening because there are too many unknowns with the asbestos, electrical and HVAC and what the Institute approved and the Museum staff agreed to in the renovation/remodel of the existing facility and the money that goes with that.

Shanklin said the Institute must make some of the decisions and he hoped the City would do what it said to honor the commitment of McMahon Foundation. Huck said the target date for the grand opening is November 1.

Beller asked that a program paper be developed to show what progress would be made by a given time. Shanklin said someone from the City Managers office should be able to respond to McMahon Foundation.

Purcell asked why a riding mower was being purchased and why three, four or five entities are all involved in mowing grass. Huck said the custodian at the Museum maintains the interior grounds and discussions were being held regarding maintenance responsibilities under the proposed trust.

Purcell said he said two years ago that we should consolidate the mowing but a lot of people are still doing it. Schumpert said this is inside the fort and that area and we have contracts for the outside; in the trust if it is outside the fence, it is the City's but if it is inside, it is the trusts. The City does not go in but for structural problems with the building; the trust will maintain the interior grass area.

Purcell said there are still too many people responsible for mowing and it should all be under one person.

Green said there is a canal in her area and Hucks employees cut the grass, then crews from Streets cut another part, and crews from other areas are doing yet another part, resulting in eight days where people have been trying to do a two block area of canal with three groups having been out there.

Williams said the anticipated cost of electricity for the Museum may have been estimated too low due to the square footage. Huck said the facility would not be open until later in the budget year and that played a part in estimating electrical costs.

LAKES: Division is responsible for grounds maintenance at Lakes Lawtonka and Ellsworth; one supervisor, three labor-type positions and one clerk are full time; several are employed on a part time basis. \$50,000 is shown in the budget for capital outlay for improvements.

Purcell said last year, \$25,000 was approved to be used to match grants on a three to one or two to one basis. Huck said the grant has not been acted on by the Oklahoma Wildlife Department. Purcell asked if the \$25,000 had been spent. Huck said no, phase one was those items that were not matchable and the other \$25,000 was an IOU but they have not initiated it and it is still pending.

Purcell asked what would be done with the \$50,000 shown in this budget. Huck said a dike at the Elgin arm on Ellsworth; road improvements in several areas; and rip rap around the Lake Ellsworth shoreline. Income produced through lake operations was discussed, as well as expenditures required.

Williams asked why the City should not privatize the lakes. Huck said there can be a certain amount and some is done within the department in town. Huck said one question with privatization is whether the maintenance level would be acceptable as far as mowing camp grounds and cleaning restrooms, and that can be debated. Staff has never been directed to look at cost comparison for privatization vs. City in-house costs.

Williams said the concessionaires on both ends of Lawtonka have camping and the city has camping in the middle. It seems natural to contract that to either one of the concessions instead of competing. The City's rates are lower than area rates so we are keeping that camping market depressed. Huck said Lawton's rates are 30-40% of what is charged at State parks; two years ago the camping fee was increased from \$5 to \$8 per night and that was a big debate at that time.

Maples said the State parks have more to offer, and that there is little offered at Lawtonka. She said increasing the fees was not the answer. Williams said the City is setting a level of pricing that is not helping the City or the concessions and asked if the City should compete with the concessions. Williams said the people at the concessions are already mowing, that would have been a great initiative and it should be reviewed.

Huck said OSU is preparing a master plan, and nature programs, hiking trails, etc. are being reviewed. Shanklin said people should not have to be entertained while they are at the lakes. Maples said there is only one swing set and it is poorly maintained; people bring their own Christmas trees to the lakes to help improve the fishing.

Beller asked if the OSU study would address privatization. This was discussed and Huck will ask OSU to specifically look at this subject. Purcell said the master plan sounds like it will be only what we will build and he hoped it would cover some of the things Williams was discussing. Purcell said cost is not the issue, the plan says what will we do with the lakes and how, and that is critical; if it is determined it should be turned over to one lessee and get them to build a large motel that should be looked at although we may not do it. Green said she understood there were plans for a very large and impressive facility to be built in the lakes area by private enterprise. Williams asked that you look at contracting out at least the mowing and collecting the camping fees and make them all equal.

Recess was taken at 7:40 p.m. Council reconvened at 7:55 p.m. with all members being present.

LIBRARY: Division consists of the main library, the new branch library in Wyatt Acres, and the bookmobile program. There are 14 full time, and 13 part time, employees. Schumpert said the staff van was deleted in the capital outlay reduction. Shanklin asked if a microfilm reader was included. Marion Donaldson, Head Librarian, said it was deleted from the budget. Estimated cost is \$15,000 and staff is to determine the revenue produced from the machine currently on hand, which is now broken; new machine would use regular paper and be much more cost efficient to operate.

Green asked if smoke detectors were included. Donaldson said it was pulled from the budget. Discussion was that these could be included with the HVAC system; staff is to return an estimate of cost.

Discussion was held on providing parking for the branch library in Wyatt Acres. Approximate cost was \$20,000 and patrons now walk to the library or park on the side streets; neighborhood residents may oppose a parking lot in the subdivision. City Codes regarding zoning and parking as they would relate to a private building of this nature were discussed with comments being made that the City should conduct its business at a higher standard than the public sector is expected to follow.

Purcell asked if the County would continue to fund the total cost for one employee and response was yes. Purcell suggested the County be asked to fund some portion of the costs for books and periodicals since all County residents can use the library. Council will be asked to approve the letter of request to the County Commissioners in regard to Library funding; separation should be maintained in regard to the employee cost and any other costs involving purchase of books or other materials.

Schumpert pointed out a \$153,000 increase in the Library budget. Funds are needed to continue renovation to the interior of the main library, to include carpet replacement, and replacement of the lighting ballasts. Williams asked if consideration had been given to having an energy services company involved in the lighting. Huck said they tried to approach it in that manner but had to have engineering and RFPs due to state laws and the estimated cost of the project. Williams asked the attorney to see if the City could take advantage of that since the State has done so. Shanklin asked if there was an appraised value on the library and its contents. Huck will provide a response. Shanklin said the City is self-insured and this should be examined on such a large investment.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS: Division consists of Highland Cemetery, Building Maintenance, and Park Maintenance. Cemetery capital outlay is funded through the cemetery care fund; both weed eater and mower were shown as purchasing one and it is supposed to be two on each.

Park Maintenance is responsible for mowing parks, right of ways, and medians. Account 273 reflects cost for contract mowing.

Schumpert said Albert Johnson Park was adjusted to \$15,000 in capital outlay reductions. Huck said play equipment and a jogging trail were proposed and he would meet with area residents to determine which they would prefer due to funding reduction. Huck said there are 14 parks in the current inventory with inadequate equipment.

Council discussed the fact that Albert Johnson Park is being leased from the school system, and other lease arrangements between the City and school system were outlined. Maples asked that funding be spent in Harrell Park due to its heavy usage by bicycle riders and children. Beller asked that work be completed to trade land between the school system and the City for park purposes.

Williams said there is a vacant lot in Ward 2 that had been used as a park and asked if the land could be sold and proceeds applied to improve other parks. Beller said he had been trying to have Blue Beaver Park appraised so it could be sold but that it was a long and involved process.

MOVED by Maples, SECOND by Warren, to switch Harrell Park (bicycle park) for Albert Johnson Park for use of the \$15,000.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION by Purcell, SECOND by Green, to take no action and have Huck bring a list of the worst parks and look at it again Thursday night. AYE: Sadler, Purcell, Shanklin, Beller, Green, Williams. NAY: Maples, Warren. SUBSTITUTE MOTION CARRIED.

Williams asked for a list of vacant properties owned by the City that could be sold if they are not currently being used, to generate activity and prevent the City from having to do the maintenance.

Purcell pointed out the prairie dogs in Elmer Thomas Park are causing damage to the improvements and are too close to areas where children are playing. He asked how this could be controlled. Huck said a company in Lubbock, Texas, relocates them on occasion, and that crews euthanize the older animals to control the population.

Green said she had observed crews not producing much work and asked if there was adequate supervision. Huck said there are supervisors for all the crews.

Williams said the entrance to Elmer Thomas Park on 3rd Street is in need of repair. Huck said an estimate to repair that entrance, as well as the parking area, is roughly \$20,000, and will be brought to Council in an agenda item on June 24.

Beller asked if funding shown is only for the windscreen in Greer Park. Huck said it will include lighting, overlay of tennis courts and replacement of some windscreen which was damaged in a storm and insurance has paid some on replacement costs.

Huck said Building Maintenance provides internal support for facilities in the City inventory; there are four full time and

one part time employees. HVAC contract is included for all City buildings.

Beller said the sidewalk and entrance to City Hall on the south are in bad shape and asked that there be enough pride in the City to have a proper entrance to the building. Water stands several inches deep on the sidewalk after very little rain and the concrete is breaking off. Estimated cost to repair was \$25,000 and Shanklin suggested the work be done in-house when crews are available. The City Manager was asked to have the project done and discussion was held regarding crews being pulled from street projects to do this work; consensus was that it could be scheduled to present the least amount of disruption to other work.

Purcell said it appears there are 13 people reporting to Huck and asked if reorganization was being considered. Huck said there are six people who report to him, although there are more activities. Purcell suggested the chart be corrected. Schumpert said he planned to have some reorganization of Parks & Recreation in the following years budget proposal.

Williams said the \$62 million question with EPA regarding the sewer system has become an umbrella over the budget. He said he felt Council should be given some information on this question or have a workshop or discussion.

Schumpert said he did not object to having a workshop. He said Council had been briefed, to include some members going to Oklahoma City when we talked to DEQ. Staff is working on answering questions from EPA and DEQ and from that will come what they are willing to do. DEQ wants three phases starting with the worst basin and 6-7 years to do that basin; EPA does not agree to 20 years. Funding options are limited to ad valorem by a vote of the people, sales tax increase or add it to the utility bill. Until we know the amount of the annual cost, it appears to be premature to talk about one of the sources. If it is \$3 million, which is what we are trying to get them to agree to as far as disruption and managing, is \$3 million and that is one-half cent sales tax, \$10 on the utility bill or ad valorem tax vote. \$6 million on the utility bill would be \$30 and people could not stand that. Staff is waiting to be given the parameters to determine the best recommendation.

Williams said members are saying we know there are problems with the infrastructure, the sewer system will cost \$61 million and EPA is saying, Lawton, you have known this for a long time and have not taken corrective action, and we will make you take it. He said there are problems we have known about internally that we knew needed to be repaired and we are not getting a handle on the problems. Williams said he felt there was a feeling that the Council may not want to take a serious look at increasing fee for repairs based on the uncertainty of what EPA and DEQ will make us do on the sewer system. He said the Council must look at the worst case scenario, if it will be ten year, how we would fund that so they would have some idea. Williams said Council would then be able to see if we want to add a capital improvement fee on the utility bill to take care of the infrastructure needs.

Schumpert said there is in this budget a sewer maintenance crew on top of the \$61 million that will touch every sewer line once every five years. Williams asked if there is money for the material to repair the lines. Schumpert said the repair and maintenance account. Schumpert said one challenge is that we would not want to replace a line then have another crew replace parts of what have already been replaced. Rehab crew and maintenance crew must compliment each other. For water lines and streets, the only program is the one we have had for a number of years. Williams said there is a certain amount of money in the budget for water lines and streets, and that is all the work that can be accomplished.

Maples said the option of raising utility rates was mentioned but the time frame is unknown now and that must be determined; to constantly raise utility rates is not always the answer. Maples said the Bar-S sales tax is in effect now but will go off in a year and maybe the voters would dedicate that one cent in sales tax to the sewer system.

Williams said the streets and water lines are not getting any better, and there is the sales tax that will drop off in a year, but the fact remains that we have to have \$62 million from some source. Shanklin said you do not know if it is 10, 15 or 20 years. Maples said there was not a doubt that the Council would have to identify where the money would come from within the next year and there are other ways besides utilities. Williams said once the budget is passed, the Council will not raise the issue again on what would be done with the other infrastructure needs that are not being met, namely the streets and the water lines. Purcell said the sewer is the first priority and when we finish that, we can go to the others; until an answer is received from EPA, we cannot get there. Purcell said he had talked to the Congressional Office in Washington and they are waiting to see what EPA does before they want to come in to do anything they may be asked to do, and there may be some funds available, but until we know what EPA will require, we cannot address it.

Shanklin said every city in the United States has similar problems. He said Lawton officials have known about it, but being able to do something to change it takes a lot of dollars and the public is not willing to do that. Shanklin said he was anticipating the rewards of \$80 million in construction to see what that does to the sales tax, which has steadily decreased since the first of the year. He said what has been identified by the money we blew on smoke testing is the same as what our staff knew had to be done. Shanklin said he would like to know how much of this will be insituform, how much is replacement of line, and where is it. He said the maintenance program goes hand in hand with the rehab program and there is not that much difference between them, and we should examine doing it in-house.

Shanklin said 20% of the entire system is all we have to do, and the cost for that is \$60 million, based on a two inch flood. He said if it was 100% of the system, it would have been \$300 million, and if it would have been a three inch rain in a 24 hour period, it would have been close to \$700 million. He said the first \$3 million would come from the 1995 CIP, and that fund would be depleted by this time next year. Shanklin said he wanted to know which lines would be done on that 20%. Shanklin said it is ludicrous that we are building a wastewater treatment plant for 150,000 people; that will accept a lot of inflow and infiltration. He said Council needs to know which lines are being considered.

Next budget meeting will be held Thursday, June 5 at 5:30 p.m.

Council adjourned at 9:20 p.m.